

Fort Moultrie
Fort Sumter National Monument, on
Sullivan's Island, 3/4 mile from its
west end, SE. corner West Fort St. and Central Ave.
Charleston
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-196

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An addendum to
Fort Moultrie
Opposite Fort Sumter at entrance
to Charleston Harbor
Sullivan's Island, South Carolina
in HABS Catalog Supplement (1959)

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

FORT MOULTRIE

Location: Fort Sumter National Monument, on Sullivan's Island, 3/4 mile from its west end, Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina. [SE. corner West Fort St. and Central Ave.]

Present Owner: United States Government. Administered by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior; the superintendent, whose office is located in Fort Moultrie, is in immediate charge.

Present Use: National historical monument.

Statement of Significance: On this site, the first fort was the scene of an important victory during the American Revolution. The third and present fort played an important part in the attack on Fort Sumter which opened the Civil War.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Two forts form Fort Sumter National Monument; Fort Sumter located in mid Charleston Harbor and Fort Moultrie, a mile opposite on Sullivan's Island. These flank the main ship channel into Charleston Harbor.

A. The First Fort

In 1776 patriots built a fort of sand and palmetto logs on Sullivan's Island. It was a square structure with walls about 550 feet long; inner and outer faces of palmetto logs were 16 feet apart and the space between was filled with sand. Bastions were planned for each corner. Cannon on the seaward side were mounted on a terreplein of oak planks supported by brick pillars built 10 feet below the top of the walls. It was intended for a garrison of about 1000 men. The fort was not completed in June 1776, when attacked by the British under the command of Parker and Clinton. The defending forces, commanded by Colonel William Moultrie, drove off the British fleet of Sir Peter Parker, inflicting great damage on the ships. This victory helped prevent the British from rallying Loyalists to the Crown in a Southern campaign to put a quick end to the American Revolution.

B. The Second Fort

The second Fort Moultrie was built of brick (1796-1804); it was destroyed by flood water during a hurricane in 1804.

C. The Third Fort

Work started on the present Fort Moultrie in 1807. Completed in 1811, the earth-filled 15-foot high brick walls enclose one-and-a-half acres and a parade that had three brick barracks buildings in it until the Civil War. After Federal troops under Major Anderson withdrew from

Moultrie in 1860, South Carolina troops forthwith garrisoned the abandoned fort. On January 9, 1861, Moultrie's guns fired at the Star of the West, helping to force the supply ship to retreat without discharging supplies and reinforcements for Fort Sumter.

Cannon fire from Fort Moultrie was especially destructive during the initial attack in 1861 by Confederates on Fort Sumter. Later, on April 17, 1863, the fort engaged Federal ironclad ships which attempted to force their way past Fort Moultrie and Fort Sumter to Charleston. Sumter had few guns so Moultrie "firing like mad" contributed much to the defense of Charleston during this attack. Moultrie's guns comprised the greatest of all deterrents to Federal forces threatening Charleston from 1863 until February 1865. At that time, upon the approach of General William T. Sherman, both Moultrie and Sumter were evacuated in the closing weeks of the war.

Extensively repaired in the 1870's, Fort Moultrie was garrisoned in the Spanish-American War and in World War II, and used as a training aid in World War II. It was last garrisoned in 1947. In 1961 old Fort Moultrie became a part of Fort Sumter National Monument, administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Opened to the public in April 1963, the fort is to be rehabilitated as a part of the "MISSION 66" program of the Service.

[Note: Little has been published about Fort Moultrie to date. Studies are being made and it is anticipated that they will be intensified in the near future.]

Prepared by Omega G. East, Historian
National Park Service
Fort Sumter National Monument
August 1963.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: A brick, concrete and earth fort with two well-preserved bastions and interesting interior features.
2. Condition of fabric: The structure has undergone changes at several periods; those portions which are preserved are well maintained. Some recent gun emplacements are now being removed, and it is planned to make archaeological excavations to determine what remains of the older parts of the fort.

B. Technical Description of Plan

1. Over-all dimensions: The fortifications occupy an area roughly 500' long (E.-W.) by 350' deep (N.-S.).

2. General layout: The works rise above the surrounding grade level and fill a roughly rectangular area, whose complex perimeter is broken by bastions and gun emplacements. Inside the walls the earth level varies from near grade to mounds over subterranean works. At each corner along the north side is a bastion; centrally located between them is an entrance (sally port) which leads to several interior chambers. Along the south curtain wall and in the southeast bastion are concrete gun emplacements and bunkers; between these and the works of the sally port is a small low open area (parade). In each bastion and at other points along the perimeter are subterranean ammunition magazines.

C. Technical Description of Exterior

1. North portion. The bastions and the wall between them are of brick, with a talus about 7'-6" high, above which is a vertical piece about 4'-0" high, capped by a concrete coping 11" high. The brick wall at the top is 2'-2" thick; at the interior face is earth fill, leaving only a low parapet at the top. Brick is laid in Flemish bond, four courses being 1'-1" high. The coping is of concrete blocks 3'-6" long by 2'-6", except over the sally port gateway at the center, where granite blocks are found. This gateway has an opening 8'-0" wide by 9'-0" high, with a flat arch over it; two courses of granite above corbel out to form a simple cornice, level with the coping of the wall. The gateway is faced with granite at either side and has a vertical face; its total width is 14'-0". At either side is a small window or porthole trimmed with granite. The door is double, each leaf swinging on pivots in the sill and head; they are of a steel plate on a frame of steel angle sections. The gateway dates from the 1870's.

Each bastion projects about 40' toward the north, with corner faces about 105' long. They are about 155' apart. The northeast bastion adjoins a large mound now occupied by an electronic station (U.S. Navy).

2. West curtain wall. The portion included in the northwest bastion is similar to the north wall but the remainder is slightly lower, being without the concrete coping. At the re-entrant angle with the bastion is a semicircular-arched postern gate, faced with granite and crowned with a simple cornice. The southern wall is of brick, largely similar to the western one.
3. Typical entrance to an ammunition magazine. Each is located on a steep slope and consists of a narrow arched

doorway in a vertical face, flanked by ramping walls capped with sandstone. A heavy rectangular plank door is hung with two large strap hinges, which swing on pintles built into the masonry. The service magazines date from the 1870's.

4. Terreplein over the sally port. Over the sally port entrance and the main room just inside it is a concrete roof, with a low parapet about 25' long to shelter soldiers, firing small arms to defend the entrance. This roof or terrace falls off to the east and west to merge with earth.

D. Technical Description of Interiors

1. Sally port. This forms the major remaining subterranean interior. Just inside the (north) entrance is a room about 32' wide by 47' deep, 3 bays by 3 bays. The south bays extend like a transept 10' further to each side. The main portion of the room is covered with concrete groined vaulting about 9'-6" high at the crown, supported on piers 2'-6" by 5'-2" in plan, of concrete with some granite trim. The walls, also of concrete, are lime-plastered, but in areas where the surface has deteriorated can be seen broken brick aggregate. The "transept" has a slightly-inclined ceiling of concrete.

The first pair of piers inside the entrance carry heavy brass or bronze pintles, three on each, but there are no doors or gates in place now.

The central aisle, 9' in width, continues further to the south and terminates in a segmental-arched exit to the parade area. From it open tunnel-vaulted passageways 9' wide and 9'-2" high, to the west and the east. The one on the west is about 55' long; this is now occupied by offices of the National Park Service. The east passageway is about 45' long; at the end it connects with an ammunition magazine (two tunnel-vaulted rooms about 15' x 25' each, connecting through an opening in their long sides), an exit to open air, and to other subterranean passages leading southeast.

2. Service ammunition magazine in the northeast bastion. This consists of a concrete tunnel-vaulted room about 8' x 15' adjoined by a small vestibule at the north end. A long passage, 4' wide, extends along the west side, terminating in an exit at its south end; at its north end is a short passage with an exit to the east, up a flight of steps. The vestibule of the magazine opens into the long passage near the angle; its doorway, and the doorway into the magazine, are trimmed with granite blocks.

There is a similar service ammunition magazine in the northwest bastion, which adjoins the north side of an original main supply magazine.

3. Main supply magazine, at the west side. This appears to be largely original (1811). The main entrance to this magazine is at its southwest corner and leads to the postern gateway in the west wall of the fort. It has a smaller entrance at the northeast corner, shared with the service ammunition magazine in the northwest bastion.

At the core is a brick-walled tunnel-vaulted room about 12' x 27' by 10' high, now divided by a thin brick partition. Walls are 4'-6" thick. A brick vaulted passageway, 4' wide, extends around three sides; along the fourth, at the south, is a "porch" 12' deep and a 9'-wide passage roofed with relatively modern concrete.

E. Description of Gun Emplacements

1. In the northeast bastion is a concrete foundation, built in the 1870's for a 15" gun. It has a curved steel plate (track) along the interior part of its circumference.
2. In the northwest bastion is an emplacement constructed at the time of the First World War. It is a platform of granite, octagonal in plan, about 17' across.
3. Along the south and southeast sides are seven emplacements and related features constructed at the time of the Spanish-American War. This work is of concrete. Each gun emplacement is U-shaped, with the rounded end toward the harbor, about 12' x 18', sunk 3'-3" below a concrete terrace which slopes down gently toward the top of the outer wall. Between the pair at the center of the south side, at a lower level are two rooms, each about 8'x15' x 6'-6" high. They are reached through steel doors which open toward the parade area; walls are about 7' thick and ceilings about 5' thick. Similar shelters continue toward the east.

At the west end of these gun emplacements is a command post, projecting slightly above terrace level. It is 10' square inside, with a low slit around the sides, just below the roof, for observation. The roof is gabled, of low pitch, with a steel section supporting the ridge.

4. Over the eastern part of the sally port area are modern concrete retaining walls around an emplacement for two

guns, with earth mounded up against them on all sides except the north. The area is about 15' x 30', and behind it, to the north, are low modern concrete foundation piers enclosing an area about 18' x 30'.

F. Site

1. North of the fort, west of the center, is the grave of Ocoola, marked by a horizontal inscribed stone, enclosed by a cast iron railing.
2. Adjacent is a small obelisk commemorating the crew of the U.S.S. "Patapsco," enclosed by a cast iron railing.
3. Near the northwest bastion is a monument bearing a bronze plaque which states that Fort Moultrie was named in honor of Colonel William Moultrie.

Prepared by Harley J. McKee, Architect
National Park Service
August 1963

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Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

Historic American Building Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240